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ABSTRACT

A total of 16 surveys conducted between 1940 and 1970 which describe secondary reading programs are reviewed. Growth and development of such programs began in the 1930's. Remedial programs were most apparent in the 1940's, and attention to developmental reading, content-area reading, rate increase, and study skills came in the 1950's. The 1960's brought an extension of activities of the 1950's and added several important surveys on the status of reading instruction in secondary schools. Eight critical factors evidenced both in past decades and in the outlook for the future include: (1) the need for greater planned provision for reading improvement in secondary schools; (2) a reduction of discrepancies between existing programs and attempts to define ideal programs; (3) the accomplishment of greater staff sophistication as manifested in better instructional content; (4) the establishment of reputations of educational viability; (5) closer attention to factors demonstrated to be associated with successful programs; (6) a need for continued administrative and faculty support of programs coupled with continued federal and local funding; (7) more realistic assessment of the role of content teachers and greater encouragement for them to participate; and (8) careful, rigorous, and innovative research of programs and related activities. References are included. (MS)

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CHARACTERISTICS OF SECONDARY READING: 1940 - 1970

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Little specific attention has been given to the emergence and development of secondary reading programs. The earliest professional society publications to treat secondary reading tend to subsume reading as a function of general teacher activity. The usual historical sources on reading give the secondary reading program but brief attention. While numerous descriptions of specific school programs have appeared in the literature during the past two decades, these seldom provide details on their program antecedents. This absence of historical analysis of the collective development of organized secondary reading activity suggests a conceptual deficiency which deserves attention.

It is the intent of this paper to identify some of the more notable developments which have characterized the evolution of secondary reading programs in the United States and to critically examine some of those characteristics which bear upon current and future status of the area. Several limitations which imposed upon the paper need to be noted. The brevity of time and paper length restrict consideration to major trends and developments. In the absence of usual historical records, the observations herein are based primarily upon a review of twenty-five surveys of secondary reading activity which were published between 1942 and

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1970. Sixteen of the most pertinent of these surveys are identified in Table I.

The review focussed particular attention upon planned program activity in order to avoid the procedural difficulties which would have accompanied the analysis of ubiquitous incidental reading activity which may take place during content instruction. One of the earliest surveys located will serve to illustrate both the value of this delimitation and the difficulty of effecting it in an exact sense. In 1942, the NEA sent a secondary reading program questionnaire to principals throughout the country (4, p.45). Of the 2275 responding, 2110 reported that "provision for reading" was made in their school. Eighty per cent of this provision was reported as the normal function of the content area instructor. However, further investigation of the results reveals that 90% of these administrators considered their content staff to be not interested in the reading development of students! No rigid definition of the reading program in terms of its usual academic criteria could be employed without eliminating most of the data sources available, and, indeed, many of the current program descriptions, as well! A secondary program was considered as such if the report indicated a sense of reading conscious planning and activity which went beyond general, content area, instructional objectives.

The Emergence And Growth Of Secondary Reading

Secondary reading activity, in the organized sense, largely developed after 1940. However, concern about the reading needs of secondary students as well as a loosely structured attention to those needs in

Table I. Representative Surveys of Secondary Reading Programs

Survey	Date	Area	Target	Sample	Data Source	(%) Provision		Prog. Type (%) Response				Limitations (By Data Source)
						Incid.	Prog.	Con.	Eng.	Rd. Cl.	Rem.	
1. NEA	1942	U.S.	Second.	2275(V)	Prin.	80	44	7	69	45	6	Staff apathy
2. Witty/Brink	1947	U.S.	Sec/Rem.	400(V)	Staff		21		x		x	Narrow scope
3. Buck	1955	N.Y.	7 & 8	103(SR)	Staff	x			x			Staff training & apathy
4. Smith	1956	Mich.	Sec/Sp.Pr.	128(SR)	Prin.		40		14	41	30	Few specialists; minimal resources
5. Grissom	1959	Ill.	Sec/Sp.Pr.	648(T)	Staff		17				x	Staff apathy; min. resources
6. Baughman	1959	Ill.	Jr. High	133(V)	Staff		64		60		30	Few spec.,staff apathy
7. Patterson	1961	Mass.	Sr. High	249(T)	Prin.		42		x			Admin. problems
8. Geake	1961	Mich.	Sec/Sp.Pr.	128(SR)	Prin.		50		17	41	30	Same probs. (1956)
9. Maderia	1961	Penn.	7&8/Mandate	369(Sel)	Prin.		100		x	x		Staff training
10. Cawelti	1962	Mid-West	Sr. High	42(Sel)	Staff		64		50		55	Narrow scope
11. Simmons	1962	No.-Cen.	Second.	127(SR)	Admin.		66			x	x	Min. train.; scope
12. Martin	1967	No.-Cen.	Second.	151(SR)	Admin.		78		x	x	x	Same but improved (1962)
13. Gordon	1968	Ind.	Jr. High	96(T)	Admin.		68		x		x	Minimal scope; apathy
14. Graham	1969	Calif.	Second.	303(SR)	Prin.		75		51	33	21	Funds; Staff training
15. Farr, et.al.	1969	Ind.	Second.	550(T)	Prin.+	46	78	3	73	47	40	Funds; few spec.
16. Bowren	1969	N.M.	Second.	217(T)	Prin.+		37		x		x	Apathy; few spec.

Interpretation Sample: (T) Near total sample of target; (SR) Stratified Random; voluntary but loosely controlled response. Programs: (Con) Content teacher based activity; (Eng) Reading instruction handled by English staff; (Rd. Cl.) A class for reading instruction, per se; (Rem) Program or provision of a definite remedial emphasis. % of Program Type is in terms of average response where definite programs were reported. x indicates report of emphasis but lacking quantification. Incid. refers to report of incidental attention to reading by general staff. The Smith-Geake and the Simmons-Martin pairings are replicated studies.

some school settings predated the emergence of planned programs. An overview of the development of secondary reading should begin with the early 1900's.

Pre-1940.

It is possible that the secondary teacher provided more incidental help with the learning and language processes at the turn of the century than has been provided in modern schools. Paul Roberts has suggested that prior to highly specialized secondary teaching fields and large classes, most content teachers considered it their responsiblility to develop student writing skills. A similar case might be made for reading instruction, particularly where the interpretation of the textbook was concerned. A more focalized involvement with secondary reading emerged during the 1920's. Public attention was drawn to the extent of reading deficiency among enlistees during World War I. After the war, changing technological patterns, the occupational difficulties of the Great Depression, a growing sophistication among the citizenry, and a body of available literature, among other broad cultural factors, reinforced public and professional awareness of the value of a secondary education as well as for adequacy in reading skill.

Smith places the emergence of professional attention in secondary reading about 1930 (6, p. 269). In 1928, Yoakam (7) published his Reading and Study, an insightful treatment of these two processes which carried considerable implication for secondary school instruction. Some earlier studies of the reading process had been made which utilized young adults as subjects, and the fact that these were applied more readily to reading instruction at the elementary school and college

levels is predictive of the way secondary reading instruction will lag behind its school level counterparts in the coming years.

Some reading instructional activity of a planned nature was taking place in secondary schools by the mid-1930's. The survey made by the NEA in 1942 reported that 587 of 2275 responding schools made some special provision for reading problems. Of these, 58% had done so for at least two years, and 20% had provided such attention for more than five years. However, much of this was developmental-remedial help tendered in content classroom settings, generally English, and hardly could be classified as structured or even self conscious. Approximately forty high school-college reading skills textbooks or workbooks and perhaps another twenty-five how-to-study books were published between 1930 and 1940. This is not hard evidence of the establishment of secondary reading even in the conceptual sense, but it presaged the development of more systematic instructional efforts.

1940 to 1950.

Where the development of secondary reading is concerned, World War II exerted both a positive and negative influence. It depleted graduate schools, college faculties, diluted the thrust of professional education, and seriously inhibited educational research efforts until the latter 1940's. On the other hand, it once again aroused public and professional concern about the literacy levels of young Americans, and reinforced the concepts of a pragmatic secondary curriculum and a compulsory secondary education. The G. I. Bill provided the means for many former teachers to take graduate degrees, and since both the fields

of psychology and professional education were showing a growing interest in reading as an area of research and professional activity, some benefit was accrued in the secondary reading area.

Later in this period, there were signs that the concept of planned secondary reading activity was finding its way into professional consciousness, even though thorough reading programs of any sort were rather infrequent. Descriptions of secondary reading efforts made in individual schools began to appear in the professional literature. A few leading universities began to offer courses dealing with secondary reading. Several additional textbooks appeared as well as a number of miscellaneous articles about secondary reading. Toward the end of the Forties, two sources were published which carried at least symbolic significance for secondary reading: Reading in the High School and College, the Forty-Seventh Yearbook, Part II, of the NSSE (5), and "Improving Reading Instruction in the Secondary School," which comprised the entire February, 1950 issue of the The Bulletin of the NASSP (2). With their appearance, the professional legitimacy of secondary reading activity seemed established in concept, if not in vigorous action.

1950 to 1960.

The seedlings planted in the Thirties and which took root during the Forties, began to grow and spread during the Fifties. Descriptions of reading programs written by program personnel as well as by reading "authorities" began to appear regularly in the professional literature. Professional groups concerned with reading at the upper levels were formed, among them The National Reading Conference. The Journal of

Developmental Reading was established at Purdue University and concentrated upon publishing reading literature pertinent to the high school and college levels. In terms of professional thinking as represented in the literature, reading programs increasingly were differentiated from incidental reading activity. Surveys conducted during the period revealed a gradual growth in special reading programs. As a rough estimate, perhaps no more than one-fourth of American secondary schools provided planned instruction in reading.

Programs tended to fall into certain classifications which could be traced to developments in the previous decade. The "remedial" reading class or program was one of the most common secondary types, which is hardly surprising in view of the fact that many teachers and school officers still believed that reading was an elementary school subject. Furthermore, the rather simultaneous emergence of the concepts of secondary reading, remedial reading, and the reading specialist in professional training programs during the late 1940's and early 1950's tended to homogenize their images. Two other approaches, sometimes combined in operation--the reading "rate improvement" course and the "reading-study skills center" were rather direct transfers from the college reading laboratories which served as the base for much professional training during the period. The fourth pattern, the "developmental" reading skills class appeared with increasing frequcncy during this period, particularly at the seventh and eighth grade level, and seemed to be a product of combining the extension of the elementary basal reader program concept with the pragmatics of letting English departments assume major responsibility for reading instruction. This

classification of separate program types did not always hold up when specific school efforts were given close scrutiny. It was not uncommon for developmental classes, remedial programs, and rate-study skills centers to overlap considerably in curricula, objectives, materials, and methods employed.

1960 to 1970.

During the past decade, apparent progress in secondary reading could be observed by most of the professional indicators used for such purposes--the initiation and expansion of programs, the training and employment of secondary reading teachers, the quantity and quality of published literature, some increase in the quantity of research, increasing sensitivity to secondary reading problems and issues by the public and profession, the availability of a broader variety of instructional materials, and the establishment of service courses in secondary reading at many colleges and universities. During the first half of the decade, the growth in programs was no greater than the projected trend of the 1950's. In terms of program numbers, the increase during the latter half of the decade was dramatic, and could be traced directly to the impact of federal support through NDEA and ESEA funds.

A number of surveys of secondary reading activity were conducted during the Sixties. The results vary with the geographical area investigated, the design and sampling procedures, the school size, the school level, etc. In terms of reported figures, the percent of schools offering secondary reading programs increased about 25% during the decade, and may have included 75% of the schools in the more progressive states.

At least one state had mandated reading instruction for the seventh and eighth grades, and subtle pressures toward reading preparation were being exerted on the preservice training and certification of secondary teachers in others. In terms of frequency, the program patterns of the previous decade continued to dominate the activity. The significance of packaged instructional aids became an influence; boxes of reading materials and hardware-related programs increased greatly in popularity, and some innovative instructional patterns with program implications were seen in multi-media and "programmed approaches." Social-political pressures and federal funds were producing token programs for "disadvantaged" students at the end of the decade.

Current Status: Some Critical Factors

In spite of the gradual establishment of the secondary reading concept during the past three decades, and even considering the upsurge in secondary program numbers which has occurred in recent years, professional euphoria about the present status of secondary reading programs is hardly warranted. A close examination of the characteristics of these programs and the factors attendant to their evolution is somewhat sobering. A somewhat critical examination of some of these elements may be indicative of the challenges secondary reading programs will need to face in the coming decade.

1. After discounting the inflationary tendency of survey findings, perhaps as many as half of American secondary schools make some planned provision for reading improvement. More of such provision is made at the junior than at the senior high. There are notable variations in the density of programs reported. Higher estimates are reported for

larger schools located in urban-suburban population settings, stronger economies, and higher levels of population literacy and education. Surveys also have a tendency to mask the vitality of reported programs; the program is reported regardless of its size, quality, or impact upon the school structure. Under these circumstances, a simple majority of secondary schools with some type of operating program seems like a small return for three decades of professional concern.

2. A notable discrepancy exists between the special functions concept of secondary reading programs in school operation and the "total thrust" effort which has been idealized by textbook authors and secondary reading authorities for over a decade. In name at least, a wide variety of program patterns exist, of which the following are representative: basal reader programs, developmental classes, corrective classes, remedial programs, rate improvement classes, college preparatory reading, reading-study skills centers, learning laboratories, reading impacted content instruction, and reading programs for disadvantaged learners. During the past decade, dual phase programs, usually developmental classes operating through the junior high English department augmented by corrective-remedial efforts at either the junior or senior high, tended to evolve out of earlier single phase programs. Total thrust programs, (i.e., developmental, remedial, content-area implementation, and special enrichment programs), are rarely reported.

3. There appears to be greater variation in program names than in program content and operation. From one school to the next, the programs termed "developmental," "corrective," "remedial," or "disadvantaged" are easily interchangeable. The availability of instructional

materials tends to shape if not dictate program curricula and instructional procedures regardless of the name or objectives of the program There is nothing holy about program names, but the dependency upon commercial materials and the lack of correspondence between program objectives and instructional content certainly suggests a lack of sophistication on the part of program administrators and staff.

4. The secondary programs which have been in operation have failed to establish a reputation of educational viability. Many administrators evaluate their schools' secondary reading programs as merely adequate. Some schools have dropped their programs. Reading test gains in terms of pre-post and comparative approach studies do favor reading program subjects. The narrower the program objective and the more concentrated the instructional effort, as in rate improvement courses, the more likely such gains result. Evidence of functional reading change, (e.g., number of students successfully remediated), or of transfer value, (e.g., improvement of content course grades), has been minimal. Beneficial impact of special reading programs upon the attitude and adjustment of problem readers (e.g., the reduction of drop-out ratio), has been reported; unfortunately, most secondary reading programs have not been sold to administrators and school boards on this basis, but rather upon the hypothesized remediation of problem readers and the functional improvement of academic performance.

5. Some secondary reading programs have demonstrated much greater success than others by a variety of criteria--student skill improvement, transfer of training, administrator opinion of success and viability,

and by expert rating. Certain conditions tend to be associated with the operation of successful programs: (a) the presence of a trained, active, and personable reading specialist at home in the secondary school setting; (b) the conviction of the school administrator of the value of the program; (c) the quality of the professional climate of the school, particularly the flexibility, training, and student orientation of the teaching staff; (d) the availability of funds, facilities, and materials; and (e) the maturity of the program as exhibited by reasonable and well defined objectives, close correspondence between objectives and instructional activity, the training of the reading staff, and its public relations effort with parents, students, and general instructional staff. The intercorrelation of these factors is obvious; the rich get richer.

6. Although secondary reading teachers imply that lack of administrative support is one of the main deterrents to program development, survey evidence as early as 1940 reveals administrative recognition of the significance of reading programs. Administrators, on the other hand, cite a number of obstacles to the establishment of adequate reading programs: scarcity of trained reading personnel, lack of funds and space, place in the curriculum and/or schedule, and apathy of the general teaching staff. The availability of federal funds in recent years has spurred the initiation and expansion of programs and has helped somewhat in the training of secondary reading teachers. Trained personnel are still scarce, and at this writing, the continuation of federal support must be considered tenuous.

7. The apathy of the secondary content teacher toward reading efforts has been cited for three decades! Perhaps the content teacher of today is more aware of the generalized nature of reading deficiency among secondary students and even sympathetic toward efforts of improvement--as long as they are not personally responsible for this help. The problem is complex, involving issues of occupational selection, preservice indoctrination, ego defensiveness, curricular traditions, and professional training among others. It is apparent that the half-hearted inservice programs which have been typical of the past decade are not coping with the task. It seems equally obvious that those who would sack present special reading program efforts, even those with minimal success, in favor of a singular concentration upon content oriented reading activity, have not realistically assessed the situation which exists in most secondary schools.

8. Finally, the description, evaluation, and research pertinent to secondary reading programs and their related activities has been lacking in rigor and innovation. As a result, we know very little more about secondary reading instruction and program operations in 1970 than we did one or two decades ago. With a few exceptions, program surveys have failed to provide detailed and carefully defined results. We have no well designed nation-wide survey by which we can accurately gauge our national thrust or draw comparative associations with regional and local conditions. We have on record only a minimal number of closely controlled comparative program studies. Certainly we need to challenge our hallowed beliefs about secondary programs. Can they produce results which transfer to the academic and personal lives of students?

What does it take to obtain probability of active teacher involvement in content related reading instruction and adjustment? Are total thrust programs a realistic expectation? How do viable secondary reading programs get that way?

In the past three decades, secondary reading programs and related activity have emerged, developed in variety and numbers, and have established a place in the reading literature and research. Now it remains for them to prove their worth through maturity and undeniable evidence of student and school improvement.

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